

NEWSLETTER - PHILIPPINES 2013



TOP: A Life Straw water purification station set up in Hernani, Samar.
BOTTOM LEFT: Victims of Typhoon Yolanda plead for help to rebuild.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Prisoners receive the Word of God during an outreach.

The first thing I would like to say to all reading this is a hearty "Thank you!" for all of your support and prayers. The help given us from home, in both financial and intangible spiritual support, truly made the mission to the Philippines possible. We thank God for opening the doors to go, and for opening hearts back home to help as each was able to do so. The team returned safely to the USA last week, ending the first, but hopefully not the last, disaster response mission for Thirsty Ground International.

I don't think any of us will ever forget what we saw over there. Thousands dead, swept away by the relentless storm surge or buried under the ubiquitous piles of debris that litter the landscape. Tens of thousands of houses washed away, leaving homeless families throughout the Islands. Waves so strong they knocked concrete structures to the ground. Winds so strong - gusts recorded at 235MPH, the strength of an F4 tornado - they left behind mangled, contorted cell phone towers and 80ft tall coconut trees snapped in half.

Yet in the midst of this we saw a resilient people rising up from the rubble, grabbing a shovel and a hammer, and trying to get their life back together. We saw the love of Christ in native Filipino churches, who left behind their own families in Manila and made the dangerous, arduous journey to Samar to help strangers they never met. We saw souls troubled but eager to hear the Word of God, shaken by the tragedy around them. But above all, we saw God working and helping all along the way.

The days passed quickly but, in the short time we had, God gave us many open doors to go through. We had numerous opportunities to preach to crowds of hundreds of locals in some of the hardest hit areas. Thousands received Tagalog Scripture booklets, and we witnessed many of them intently reading these tracts. Pastors, church members and inquirers also received from the hundreds of Tagalog & Wari Bibles we were able to acquire and distribute. Many had lost everything in the storm, including the Scriptures, and were very grateful to have a Bible again.

To meet the immediate needs of the typhoon survivors, we distributed 150 water purification units to 23 pump & well sites, 5 churches, 2 Philippine NGOs, 2 prisons and a hospital. That is enough filters to purify almost 2.5 million liters of water over the lifetime of the units. We helped the Filipino-led Christian Compassion Ministries with food relief drops for over 1,000 people on Leyte Island, and also conducted our own small food relief drop on Bantayan Island for about 148 needy families. We gave out over 2.2 tons of nails to help various communities rebuild on the island of Samar, along with handing out hundreds of hammers, saws, machetes, tape measures, levels and other needed tools. We even found a half dozen chainsaws to entrust to community and church leaders to clear debris and cut lumber for rebuilding. One good chainsaw in the community can cut enough lumber from downed trees to rebuild multiple homes.

In all these things our team was very aware that without the help of God, and the support of the churches and individuals back home, none of this would have been possible. The night before our team left the Philippines, one of the Filipino Christians came to me and said to please thank those back home on his behalf, and on behalf of the people who suffered much from Typhoon Yolanda. All across the Islands we were met with grateful people who were truly poor and sincerely thankful for the help. One community without an evangelical church even opened up its doors out of their gratitude to allow a Filipino Christian working with us permission to build a chapel for preaching within their district. I extend to you all reading this the "Thank you!" and "Salamat Po!" from those in the Philippines. Thank you again for all you helped to do. Soli Deo Gloria!

BY THE NUMBERS

A Quick Look
— At —
The Mission

DISASTER	WATER	MINISTRY	RELIEF
 235 MPH TOP WINDS	 150 WATER FILTERS	 5,000 SCRIPTURE BOOKS	 2.2 TONS REBUILD NAILS
 5,924 KNOWN DEATHS	 2.5 MILLION TOTAL LITERS*	 320 BIBLES GIVEN	 400 TOOL PACKS
 27,022 KNOWN INJURIES	 50,000 AVG LITERS/DAY*	 10 CHURCHES HELPED	 148 FOOD PACKS
 585,134 HOMES DESTROYED			
 2.6 MILLION FAMILIES AFFECTED			

*The total estimated liters every purification unit combined operating to max life cycle could produce; not the actual amount we purified there!

“Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.
 And when I am dying, how happy I'll be, If the lamp of my life has been burned out for Thee.”

- C.T. Studd, Missionary

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